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Mentoring Programs for Urban Youth:
Handle With Care

by Bonnie Benard

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Resource Center
Mentor Program
State of California
Alcohol and Drug Programs
1700 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

(800) 444-3066 (California Only)
(916) 327-3728

FAX: (916) 323-1270
TTY: (916) 445-1942
Internet: http://www.adp.cahwnet.gov

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Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

Far West Laboratory for Educational
Research and Development
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, California 94107-1242

The Southwest Regional Educational Laboratory
4665 Lampson Avenue
Los Alamitos, California 90720

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Introduction

During the last decade a social movement has quietly but rapidly been gaining momentum, the "mentoring" of youth by adult volunteers. Commonly considered a one-on-one relationship between an adult and youth that continues over time and is focused on the youth's development, mentoring's popularity and increasing presence in programs concerned with addressing the needs of youth at risk for educational failure, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and substance abuserequires preventionists to take a closer look at the literature and research on this intervention. Specifically, we need to explore whether planned mentoring is a viable prevention strategy. In other words, does mentoring promote the healthy development of children and youth? The answer to this question is not a simple yes or no, as we see reflected in the titles of recent publications: "Mentoring Programs: Promise and Paradox" (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992) and *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring* (Murray, 1991).

This paper will attempt to sort out some of the issues surrounding mentoring and hopefully provide the prevention field with a useful perspective on this strategy. After a brief overview of the research literature on the mentoring movement currently focused on disadvantaged urban youth, we'll discuss the rationales for this approach, the characteristics of effective mentoring relationships and programs, and the implications and issues surrounding this strategy for prevention policy.

A major disclaimer to this review: Virtually all the studies focused on planned mentoring programs in urban areas. This review in no way means to diminish the plight of isolated rural youth, especially Native American youth living on reservations. According to a recent report of the Children's Defense Fund, 14.9 million, or one-fourth of American children living in rural areas, face conditions "just as bleak and in some respects even bleaker than their metropolitan counterparts" (1992). Not only are the rates of rural unemployment higher, but incomes are lower, and rural children and their families have access to and receive fewer services such as health care, child care, and housing assistance. Furthermore, rural schools are generally poorer and offer a narrower range of programs. Clearly, the problems and issues involved in creating successful mentoring programs in urban areas are compounded and even prohibitive in rural areas given the often profound isolation.

The Rise of Planned Mentoring for Disadvantaged Urban Youths

Mentoring's popularity and increasing presence in programs concerned with addressing the needs of youth at risk for educational failure, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and substance abuse requires preventionists to take a closer look at the literature and research on this intervention.

Several forces appear to play into the rising popularity of mentoring as a strategy to help disadvantaged urban youth. First of all, mentoring in the corporate world had become sine qua non as a key to success by the mid-1980s, due in part to books like Rosabeth Kantor's *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) and Daniel Levinson's *The Seasons of A Man's Life* (1978), both of which clearly identified that successful executives usually had someone senior in the organization guiding their way. Quoting one early 1980s commentator, "The subject of talk shows, business seminars, journal and magazine articles, the interest in mentoring has reached mania proportions. The listener or reader is told that mentoring is the key to career and academic success" (Freedman, 1992, p. 15). Since, as Kantor's and others' research soon bore out, women and minorities were traditionally blocked out of this pathway to success, planned mentoring programs increasingly became a popular means to break through this "glass ceiling." And the education field was not slow to adapt the mentoring model as a means for successfully inducting new teachers into the fold (Evergreen Collegial Teacher Training Consortium, 1987; Shulman and Colbert, 1987).

Given this spread of planned mentoring into both the business world and the world of teaching and other helping services, the groundwork was laid for the adoption of this approach in the education and youth service arenas, increasingly strapped for funding, as an inexpensive means to, in some way, ameliorate the conditions for disadvantaged youth. A major force propelling this movement has been the push for volunteerism as the remedy for our social ills by our last two presidents, culminating in the current White House office on volunteerism and the Points of Light Foundation which is dedicated to identifying and honoring exemplary volunteers--
especially those serving as mentors. A recent outgrowth of this has been the One-to-One Foundation whose sole focus is the dissemination of information about mentoring. Obviously, then, mentoring has an appeal at the *policy* level to those segments of our society, especially the corporate sector, that feel "charity" can solve some of the massive social and economic problems that their corporate policies helped create (Wilson,1987).

On the other hand, volunteerism also has an appeal to those individuals who feel powerless to effect change in our current political system, to make the truly systemic changes that will eradicate poverty in our society. Through work as a mentor to a youth in need, they feel they are at least doing something. And certainly , as Robert Bellah and his colleagues found in their study of American life, *Habits of the Heart* many individuals just plain have a need to give of themselves by helping and connecting with another human being (1985). Mentoring programs provide this opportunity.

Besides the push for and appeal to volunteerism, mentoring has also been strongly advocated by community activists in poverty-stricken inner cities who increasingly witness the isolation of urban youth. As Oakland's Urban Strategies Council's guide on mentoring describes the situation, "Today poor inner city families have been left behind by prosperity, with fewer jobs, shops and services and a tax base often inadequate to their neighborhoods' needs. A generation of low-income Black families has been deprived of access to the network of advisors and role models that helped previous generations enter the world of employment and self-sufficiency. And low-income youth, whose parents may be under enormous strain, no longer have access to a wider community of supportive adults" (Walsh, 1989, p. 7-8). The need to link these youth to outside resources and support is clearly one of survival that these communities are addressing through mentoring efforts.

Furthermore, the growing concern of commission after commission (in the 1980s and on into the 1990s with the publication of the SCANS report in 1991) with the unpreparedness of American youth to take their place as the next generation of workers has been a powerful force in focusing middle-class corporate attention on the plight of youth growing up in poverty--youth who will comprise a growing percentage of the future workforce--and on the need for forging a linkage between the worlds of school and work. The result has been a rapidly growing involvement by the corporate sector with mentoring in terms of both financial support and with workplace mentorship programs that often take the form of school-to-work transition efforts, work-based learning, and youth apprenticeship.

And, certainly last but not least, the education and social service fields have chosen to embrace mentoring as a result of the daily contact teachers and youth workers have with an increasing number of kids so obviously in need of resources and support. Both fields have witnessed over a decade of neglect on the part of federal, state, and even local governments toward creating coordinated, integrated family and child policies that link families and children with resources and support. A mentor, thus, is often seen as a crisis interventionist, an advocate who can connect a child to resources and support.

Clearly, mentoring has emerged in the last decade as a popular intervention, for a variety of reasons, to several constituencies, encompassing both ends of the political as well as the socioeconomic spectrum. Moreover, as Marc Freedman (1991) states in his recent reflection on the mentoring movement, "Mentoring [also] offers a set of timely and attractive [intrinsic] properties that help explain its emergence as a means to achieve social linkage":

1 Mentoring appears *simple*. As One-to-One materials state, "Maybe you can't change the world, but you can make a difference in the future of at least one young person."

2 Mentoring is *direct*. The mentor has direct, personal contact with a youth without layers of bureaucratic red tape.

3 Mentoring appears *cheap*. Because it uses volunteers, it is perceived as a low-cost

alternative to public services.

4 Mentoring is positively *perceived*. Popular culture has made being a mentor or being mentored an admirable undertaking.

5 Mentoring is seen as *legitimate*. "It is a sanctioned role for unrelated adults to play in the lives of youth, as reflected by the many stories that help maintain its honored place in our culture" (p. 37). Furthermore, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, as the premier mentoring effort in the country, is also one of the most respected social programs.

6 Mentoring is *flexible*. Mentoring has something for everyone. As Freedman states, "At one level, mentoring speaks to the American traditions of individual achievement, progress and optimism. It is connected to an improved workforce and economic competitiveness. At the same time, mentoring has another, more subtle allure. This aspect speaks to yearning for community lost, to a time of greater civility and responsibility for strangers."

Adapted from Freedman, 1991, p. 37)

"At one level, mentoring speaks to theAmerican traditions of individual achievement, progress and optimism. It is connected to an improved workforce and economic competitiveness... At the same time, mentoring has another, more subtle allure. This aspect speaks to yearning for community lost, to a time of greater civility and responsibility for strangers."

- Marc Freedman

That mentoring has fulfilled so many diverse needs in so many diverse constituencies partially explains the tremendous variety in programs, as well as the diversity in purposes and missions, structures and homes in programs that call themselves mentoring. According to Freedman, "Mentoring programs range in size from ambitious national initiatives to local efforts with diverse sponsors. Individual programs typically maintain from a handful to several hundred matches each year" (p. 21). For example, on the national level we have the highly organized Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization, focused on youth with an absent parent, which has been around for 85 years and presently consists of 483 local affiliates in 49 states with current matches of 60,000 youth with adults and 40,000 more youth on waiting lists. Career Beginnings, begun in 1985 as a program to increase college attendance by non-college-bound youth, has linked, per year, more than 2000 high school juniors and seniors from low-income families with mentors from the business community in 21 cities and 13 states.

Another national network is Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL) which is administered by Campus Compact, an offshoot of the Education Commission of the States. CPIL matches

college students with disadvantaged youth in grades four through nine and is concerned with both creating a service ethic among the mentors as well as with increasing the academic competence of middle-school youth. Primarily known as a community youth service program, this program has worked with 7000 mentors and 7000 students as of 1990. The much-popularized I Have A Dream Foundation, which promises full college tuition to youth graduating from high school by "sponsors" serving in mentoring roles, is also now a national effort with projects established in 15 cities and, as of summer 1990, $50 million awarded to over 140 classes (Higgins et al, 1991). We also have an array of intergenerational programs that match elderly citizens with youth through the Linking Lifetimes project which is in 11 sites with 10 to 30 matches per site (Freedman, 1991).

Complementing these representative--and not inclusive--national efforts are numerous statewide initiatives begun in Oregon, New York, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Kansas, Minnesota, California, and probably others, established to encourage, give guidance, and build a network of local mentoring programs. Similarly, a recent GAO survey of all two- and four-year colleges and universities found that 29 percent had mentoring and tutoring programs (Calahan and Farris, 1990). As for local initiatives and programs--there are thousands! Communities have created mentoring programs to work with pregnant and parenting teens, adjudicated juveniles, gang members, elementary, middle, junior, and high school students at risk for dropping out, youth in foster care. Mentors have been elderly citizens, college students, older peers, dropouts, business women and men, teachers, youth workers, etc. Mentoring settings include not only schools and colleges but human service agencies, civic organizations, and the workplace. A few cities like New York and Oakland, California, have even set up their own mentoring resource centers to coordinate local mentoring programs. The focus of these programs varies from dropout prevention, creating smooth transitions (either school-to-work or elementary to middle or junior to senior high and even high school to college), and case management (coordination of social services) to job training, college retention, college attendance, literacy, tutoring, child rearing, employment, community development, youth service, friendship, as well as the prevention of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and crime and violence.

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In sum, mentoring is a major movement that appears to have something for everyone. According to Marc Freedman, a "great fervor" now surrounds this approach, especially given the countless moving success stories recounted in the media in which youth describe how their lives were turned around through mentoring. "Given mentoring's appeal, it is not surprising that the current mentoring movement has spawned not only a flurry of activity, but

enormous expectations for its effectiveness in helping disadvantaged youth" (1991, p. 41). The expectations or "new mythology" that Freedman describes are the following:

1 Mentoring is easy (it's easy to make a difference in a kid's life with just a few short hours a month).

2 Mentoring is cheap (it's totally a volunteer effort).

3 Mentoring is a mass movement (millions of adults are volunteering to mentor).

4 Mentoring is for the truly disadvantaged (it will prevent poverty, homelessness, etc.).

5 Mentoring is a success strategy (mentored youth will be successful).

6 Mentoring will make America great (it will do all of the above, thus maintaining our status as a world power).

Adapted from Freedman, 1991, p. 42

Clearly, the time has come to examine some of these "myths," to see if, indeed, mentoring programs are living up to these expectations. Both Freedman's document, *The Kindness of Strangers: Reflections on the Mentoring Movement* yet unpublished document by Flaxman and Ascher,*Mentoring in Action: The Efforts of Programs in New York City* (1992), are insightful, thorough efforts to do just that. Much of the following discussion on just what mentoring is doing and can realistically do, especially in terms of addressing our major concern of whether mentoring is a viable, effective prevention strategy, will draw on their recent research.

Let's now move from a description of what's happening in the mentoring field to examining a research-based rationale for the mentoring approach.

Research-Based Rationale

According to James Coleman, "In recent years, sociologists and a few economists have recognized that the social relations that exist in the family or in the community outside the family... constitute a form of capital" that is critical to human development. In contrast to physical of financial capital, which exist only tangible resources, or human capital, which embodied is in the knowledge and skills that person has, "Social capital exists in the relationships between persons."

A powerful rationale for mentoring emanates from the longitudinal research of Emmy Werner and others who have found that adult relationships, i.e., natural mentoring, not only provided by parents and grandparents but by neighbors, teachers, and other concerned adults, are a protective factor for youth growing up in stressful family and community environments. Werner and Smith stated in their seminal study of 700 youth growing up in high-risk environments that the key to effective prevention efforts is to reinforce, within every arena, the natural social bonds-- between young and old, between siblings, between friends-- "that give meaning to one's life and a reason for commitment and caring" (1982, Conclusion).

Augmenting these rigorous, long-term examinations of life trajectories and outcomes are volumes of case studies, biographies and autobiographies of successful and famous individuals, and anecdotal observations of youths' lives that clearly identify the often pivotal role supportive adults played in the life success of the youth they mentored. For example, Bernard Lefkowitz's book, *Tough Change: Growing Up on Your Own in America*, is based on interviews with 500 disadvantaged youth, a majority of whom credited their success to the support of a caring adult in their lives (1986). In fact, Public/Private Ventures recently initiated a number of research projects focused on mentoring based on their unintended findings from evaluations over the years of youth job training and apprenticeship programs that the bonds formed between the youths and the adults in the program were often the critical factor in whether the program had an impact on the youths' lives (Walsh, 1989).

A perspective for explaining the above findings on the importance of supportive adults in kids' lives, and thus implicating mentoring, evolves from the theory of social capital. According to James Coleman, "In recent years, sociologists and a few economists have recognized that the social relations that exist in the family or in the community outside the family constitute a form of capital" that is critical to human development. In contrast to physical or financial capital, which exist only in tangible resources, or human capital, which is embodied in the knowledge and skills that a person has, "Social capital exists in the relations between persons" (1991, p. 7). And it is social capital that enables children to develop the necessary "attitudes, effort, and conception of self that they need to succeed in school and as adults" (Coleman, 1987, p. 38). What Coleman is essentially describing is caring relationships that provide "attention, personal interest, and intensity of involvement, some persistence and continuity over time, and a certain degree of intimacy" (1987, p. 38). These social relationships are not an end in themselves, however, but rather provide youth with the

motivation to access the resources--both internal and external--they need to succeed.

The key question preventionists must address, then, is, "Can planned mentoring programs create the same positive outcomes as these mentoring relationships that evolved naturally?"

Given major demographic and economic shifts and trends the last twenty-five years (i.e., women entering the workforce, the increase in single-parent families, the decrease in extended family networks, technological innovations, and the relocation of manufacturing industries out of central cities), it is clear that the family and the community, traditionally the providers of social capital for youth, no longer are able to do this for a growing percentage of our youthful population. While youth from all socioeconomic classes have been affected by disruptions in family and community social networks, the effect on disadvantaged youth (comprising from one-fourth to one-third of school-age youth) has been severe. For youth growing up in poverty, the financial "capital" is not there to purchase the resources like quality child care, quality schooling, and quality after-school programs that provide social capital in terms of additional caring adult support. Furthermore, given the exodus of middle-class African American families from inner cities, the children left behind lack the relationships with successful role models that were available to earlier generations (Wilson, 1987). In other words, "The informal networks of support and concern [that] create a constellation of caring and [which, in turn,] promote healthy choices and productive lifestyles throughout the life span" are increasingly just not there for an ever-growing number of children and youth today (Tice, 1991, p. 389).

We could cite other research-based rationales that also implicate mentoring as a strategy that supports the healthy development of youth--especially social learning theory, which postulates that humans tend to emulate the behavior they see in others they care for and admire (Bandura, 1977). However, the above rationale based on research that clearly establishes the critical importance of caring adult relationships for successful outcomes for kids also makes the direct case for mentoring programs which, by definition, attempt to create a one-on-one, adult-to-youth relationship that lasts over time and is focused on the developmental needs of youth. The key question preventionists must address, then, is, "Can planned mentoring programs create the same positive outcomes as these mentoring relationships that evolved naturally?"

To truly answer this question requires longitudinal impact evaluations of planned mentoring interventions. "Successful mentoring can really only be measured over time: by how efficiently the mentees move toward their own educational goals as well as toward career and personal goals that they may not reach for a dozen years or more after they have been mentored" (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992, p. 56). Needless to say, this evidence does not exist. In fact, as Flaxman and
Ascher state, "Unfortunately, we know very little about what mentoring will accomplish, because there is very little research on its effects" (1992, p. 8). While the literature on mentoring has grown significantly in the last few years, most of this has been conceptual and

descriptive. Research on program implementation or studies using experimental designs is scarce. However, the program evaluation research that does exist, such as Cave and Quint's evaluation of Career Beginnings (1990), McPartland and Nettles' study of Project RAISE (1991), Ferguson's study of community-based programs for African American males (1990), and Higgins et al's initial study of the I Have A Dream program (1991), clearly identifies the establishment of a *caring relationship* between the adult and youth as the lodestone, the "master key," according to Ferguson (1990), that opens the door to success for youth. Clearly, then, the answer to the question of whether planned mentoring programs can work is "Yes--if ." Planned mentoring can work if a caring relationship develops. Before discussing guidelines for creating programs that facilitate the development of a caring mentoring relationship, let's first examine just what makes up an effective mentoring relationship.

The Mentoring Relationship

Personalized Attention and Care

While mentoring programs are probably characterized more by their diversity than similarity, the essential component, by definition, is the focus on the development of a one-to-one relationship between an adult and youth that continues over time and is focused on the youth's social and academic development. However, as Flaxman and Ascher point out, "When program administrators talk about `one-to-one mentoring,' they are not discussing an essential numerical formula; rather, they are describing their intention to provide the *personalized attention and care* we usually associate with a good interpersonal relationship" (1992, p. 15). "Unlike traditional teaching, where everyone is supposed to learn the same curriculum, often at the same pace-- despite personal interests, abilities, or conflicts--mentoring asks that these very interests and conflicts be the heart of the relationship between the adult and the youth" (1992, p. 15). Expressions like "Being there for a kid" or "Looking out for a youth" or "Keeping a child from falling through the cracks" echo throughout various mentoring program descriptions.

Furthermore, as Ron Ferguson explains in his study of community-based programs for African American youth, "Caring relationships that provide affiliation [i.e., belonging] and security are the foundation of what programs provide. Without the affiliation and security of caring relationships, youth hesitate to incur the costs or to take the risks that conventional success may require. Adults asking children to pursue life options that seem unattainable (e.g., graduate from high school) or to practice behaviors of which peers disapprove (e.g., abstain from sex or avoid drugs) are asking them to forego popular pleasures and to risk failure and social ostracism. *Caring relationships are critical in programs because friendships with program-related youth and adults can compensate to some degree for lost affiliation and influence with the old peer group"*(1990, pp. 10-11).

Access to Resources

Besides personalized attention and care, the mentoring relationship is intended to provide youth from disadvantaged environments with another form of support, an access to resources--
especially cultural and vocational--that they have systematically been denied. "A mentor can provide access to and acquaint the student with values, customs, resources, and people of different occupational and social worlds" (Smink, 1990, p. 3). In this role of ombuds-person, broker, or advocate, adults not only can expose and link youth to services and opportunities and social networks, but can model as well as directly instruct the youth in the skills needed to successfully negotiate the bureaucratic intricacies of institutions like schools, colleges, employment agencies, and workplaces. In sum, "Beyond exposing youth to options, many mentors actively try to help youth take advantage of opportunities. They tutor the youngsters, coach them on job interviews, investigate scholarships, take them to visit college campuses,

get them internships. They advocate for them in a variety of situations, such as making sure they get the kind of treatment in school that middle-class kids have come to expect" (Freedman, 1991,
p. 44).

Positive/High Expectations

Herein probably lies the most essential requirement for an effective mentoring realtionship: an adult attitude that views youth as resources to be nurtured and not problems to be fixed.

In addition to providing support to a youth, one of the major functions of a mentor is to convey to a youth the message that he/she can be successful. Herein probably lies the most essential requirement for an effective mentoring relationship: an adult attitude that views youth as resources to be nurtured and not problems to be fixed. Without this positive attitude, one cannot communicate high expectations.

Human development expert Urie Bronfenbrenner often quotes a simple principle that Makarenko, a Russian educator, employed in his extremely successful programs for "wayward adolescents" in the 1920s: "The maximum of support with the maximum of challenge." Not only has this principle been reaffirmed time and again in research on resilient children (Benard, 1991), but according to Bronfenbrenner, "This combination of support and challenge is essential, if children are to avoid alienation and develop into capable young adults" (1986, p. 433).

Research on the I Have A Dream Foundation's mentoring programs (including Eugene Lang's original group) has found this combination of support and challenge to be an integral component in their success. According to Public/Private Ventures, "Project coordinators develop complex relationships with Dreamers that convey caring and high expectations on a day-to-day basis" (Higgins et al, 1991, p. 31). Similarly, a journalist investigating I Have A Dream recently commented, "While sponsors may be viewed as fairy godmothers and godfathers waving a distant promise of tuition dollars, the project coordinators are like guardian angels who provide the daily guidance and support needed to make sure the students have a shot at collecting on their sponsor's tuition offer" (Sommerfeld, 1992).

"In mentoring as in child rearing, this need to see on one's own has to be carefully, if subtly, preserved and enhanced so as not to deprive the individual, who is momentarily under guidence, of motivation and dignity."

- Kaoru Yamamoto

For disadvantaged youth, the need for relationships that communicate high expectations is particularly great. Not only have these youth suffered from the effects of lessening social supports in their lives, but African American youth especially have been subjected to low

expectations from the beginning of their lives in school--"rumors of inferiority," as Jeff Howard of the Efficacy Institute expresses it--that have resulted in these youths avoiding intellectual challenge and, thus, academic success. "The need to avoid intellectual competition is a psychological reaction to an image of black intellectual inferiority that has been projected by the larger society, and to a less than conscious process of internalization of that image by black people over the generations" (Howard and Hammond, 1985, p. 19). Therefore, a major thrust of mentoring programs with disadvantaged youth is to reinforce constantly the positive expectation that they have everything it takes to be successful and that if they have failed, it is due to lack of effort and not lack of ability. According to Howard, mentors must first directly teach children that intellectual development is something they can achieve through effort. "Think you can; Work hard; Get smart!" is the message mentors must convey. Secondly, mentors must build up children's confidence through their belief in and emotional support for the child by communicating the following positive, nurturing expectation: "This schoolwork I am asking you to do is important; I know you can do it; and I won't give up on you." And finally, mentors must teach youth the efficacy of effective effort, step-by-step. This involves gearing instruction to where the youth is at in learning, "instilling confidence, teaching him/her to think of failures or difficulties as feedback calling for an alternative approach to the task, and then supporting him/her through the step-by-step process of effective application of effort at increasingly challenging goals" (Howard, 1990, p. 13-15).

The goal of the above process, of course, is the youth's internalization of positive expectations for him/herself, the development of a sense of self-efficacy, and a belief in and hope for a bright future, all characteristics that have consistently been identified in protective factor research as belonging to resilient children, children who have succeeded in spite of great adversity. Clearly, adults who consistently, over time, communicate the above message to youth are facilitating the development of resiliency in youth. Furthermore, according to Stanton Peele, "There is no better antidote for drug abuse than adolescents' beliefs that the world is a positive place, that they can accomplish what they want, and that they can gain satisfaction from life" (1986, p. 24).

Reciprocity/Youth Participation

For disadvantaged youth, many of whom have systematically been denied the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in their schools and classrooms, a positive mentoring relationship can fulfill this very basic human need for power and control over one's life through active participation as both a mentee and as a mentor.

While discussed far less often in the adult-to-youth mentoring literature than that on organizational mentoring, reciprocity is clearly an essential component in any healthy relationship (Healy and Welchert, 1990; Kram and Isabella, 1985). To James Clawson, a longtime researcher of organizational mentoring, the key ingredient of a successful mentor-protëgë relationship is the amount of mutual respect and liking in the relationship (Hurley, 1988, p. 43). According to the One on One Foundation, "To make a connection [i.e.,

establish a relationship] means to gain the trust of the child and to foster mutual respect" (1991, p. 3). A caring relationship, then, is not a one-way, adult-to-youth connection but a two-way interaction in which youth are active participants.

Because of the education field's tendency (old-paradigm thinking!) to view youth as passive recipients, it's critical that a mentoring relationship be grounded in reciprocity. As Kaoru Yamamoto eloquently describes this imperative, "In mentoring, as in child rearing, this need to see on one's own has to be carefully, if subtly, preserved and enhanced so as not to deprive the individual, who is momentarily under guidance, of motivation and dignity. There must be, in both the guide and the guided, a delicate interweaving of a sense of seeing and being seen. One compliments the other, and the two together help each person retain and develop his or her own idea of self as a unique, competent, and worthy being" (1988, p. 184-185). In her book on caring, Nel Noddings also agrees that, "What the cared-for gives to the relation either in direct response to the one-caring or in personal delight or in happy growth before her eyes is genuine reciprocity. It contributes to the maintenance of the relation and serves to prevent the caring from turning back on the one-caring in the form of anguish and concern for self" (1984, p. 74).

That a mentoring relationship is a mutually transforming one was confirmed in a survey of 800 Career Beginnings participants from 16 cities (Harris, 1990). Not only did at least half the students say mentoring helped them learn to succeed, improve their grades, avoid drugs, increase their regard for people of other races, and improve their relationships with teachers and family, but the adults also reported positive benefits. Mentoring helped them:

- Fulfill their own responsibilities *half*
- Strengthen family relationships *one-fourth*
- Increase their regard for people of other races *half*
- Recognize they make a difference *one-fourth*
- Be willing to get involved again*four-fifths*

Probably the best way to communicate to a youth the message of positive expectations and to encourage reciprocity is to engage the youth in joint problem-solving and decisionmaking on an ongoing basis, thereby creating a truly collaborative relationship. This conveys the message that his/her opinion is listened to, respected, and acted upon. Furthermore, this empowers the youth by not only enhancing his/her problem-solving skills but his/her sense of autonomy as well, both of which are traits of a resilient child. In addition, providing the opportunity for a mentored student to become mentor to a younger student (i.e., cross-age peer helping) is a powerful strategy for getting a student actively engaged as well as for spreading a caring ethic and reciprocity (Freedman, 1991, p. 69; Hardcastle, 1991, p. 207). For disadvantaged youth, many of whom have systematically been denied the opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in their schools and classrooms, a positive mentoring relationship can fulfill this very basic human need for power and control over one's life through active participation as both a mentee and as a mentor.

Commitment

While the above components are critical to establishing a viable mentoring relationship, they are all moot unless an adult is willing to make a "sustained personal commitment," in the case of planned mentoring programs, for whatever is the designated period of time (One on One Foundation, 1991, p. 3). Similarly, the youth also has to commit to the agreed upon time. While in the true sense of "natural" mentoring, a relationship is measured in years, most planned mentoring programs require a commitment of from six weeks to one year in duration and from an hour a week to daily contact. By making a time commitment, both the adult and student are also thereby committing themselves to being predictable, available, accessible, and responsive--all antecedents to the development of trust and mutual respect in a relationship (Korn, 1991, p. 14).

A Caveat

"Programs that attempt to solve this problem [of lack of caring adults in youth's lives] run directly into one of the conditions that created it: busy adults with little time to devote to the young."

- Stephen and Mary Hamilton

Obviously a short-term relationship with only a few hours of contact cannot hope to achieve the richness, depth, and complexity--let alone have the power to impact outcomes like substance abuse--that a long-term relationship potentiates. Moreover, a grave danger exists in planning programs for youth based on a one-to-one, unequal power relationship. For example, if the adult quits the program or if the program stops--a situation Flaxman and Ascher encountered all too frequently in their investigation of New York City mentoring programs (1992)--the involved youth experiences yet another disappointment in a life often filled with disappointments. Reinforcing the feeling that no one is there for him/her, the process of alienation becomes further entrenched. Furthermore, on the adult side, as Freedman points out, "Disappointment is also destructive." Quoting the founder of Mentors, Inc., in Washington, D.C., "Many of the mentors who withdraw from the programs do so because their feelings have been hurt and hurt can lead to anger and to the reinforcement of prejudice" (1991, p. 54).

Another caution underlying the mentoring movement is that mentoring programs are ultimately "rooted in a paradox." According to Stephen and Mary Hamilton, implementers and evaluators of Linking Up, a mentor demonstration project of Cornell University's Department of Human Development and Family Studies, "Mentoring programs are intended to synthesize a natural human process that has undeniable power. There is no doubt that a close, nurturing relationship between a wise and caring adult and a youth is beneficial to both. However, the `natural' way for this to happen is that an adult and a youth gradually become close through contact in their daily lives. It is not clear that a program can replicate this

process. Because of the extraordinarily dismal conditions facing many youths today and the hectic lives of many adults, such gradual contact is rare, and the attempt to create it seems worth the effort. *Nevertheless, programs that attempt to solve this problem run directly into one of the conditions that created it: busy adults with little time to devote to the young.* The more a program demands from a mentor--number of meetings with proteges, amount of training, reporting requirements, support group meeting with other mentors, conferences with advisors, and so on--the smaller the number of adults who are willing to volunteer" (1992, p. 550).

"You can't just turn volunteers and kids loose, and hope for the best. It's plain unrealistic to assume mentoring is easy, or that you can do it on the cheap."

- Marjorie Wilkes, New York City Mentoring

Freedman agrees that, "This problem is particularly acute because the adults targeted by mentoring programs are often the same individuals whose work soaks up all their time. These are lawyers, managers, physicians and other professionals who are putting in 60, 70, or even 80 hours a week on the job and often do not have time to spend with their own kids." Regardless of whether planned mentoring programs *should* exist, they *do* exist--including some very successful ones--and will probably continue to exist for all the earlier discussed reasons. Therefore, it is imperative for the welfare of the children and youth whose lives they touch that mentoring programs be carefully planned to nurture the mentoring relationship. While little research actually exists on program implementation, the following guidelines summarize the current thinking--or as Marc Freedman refers to it, "some common-sense wisdom about best practices"-- f investigators and program planners for creating planned mentoring programs (1991, p. 60).

Guidelines for Planned Mentoring Programs

Careful Program Planning Process

While we are not going to discuss here the program development process, per se, suffice it to say that establishing a mentoring program, like any planned program, must follow a careful process of program development that includes the following commonly identified components:

- Assess program need *and* resources
- Secure school district commitment
- Identify and select planning team members (including youth)
- Refine program goals and objectives
- Develop activities and procedures
- Recruit, select, and match mentors and students
- Train all participants
- Monitor progress
- Evaluate and revise program

(Adapted from Gray and Smink, in Smink, 1990, pp. 5-6, 10-11)

Many practitioner guides and manuals now exist, such as Smink's (1990), Foster and Andersen's (1990), Rivkin's (1990), and the One on One Foundation's (1991)--plus several others developed by the United Way, the Abell Foundation, and Campus Partners in Learning (cited in Freedman, 1991, p. 85). And probably several more are currently being written by local programs and resource centers. As is the case with any intervention, however, no one model exists. Rather, programs must grow out of their local context, be based on local resources and needs, and be developed collaboratively by representative participants.

Energy and Commitment of Program Manager

Marc Freedman claims that paid field staff are the "most important single ingredient " in successful mentoring programs.

Flaxman and Ascher concluded from their survey of New York City mentoring programs that, "Most programs exist because of the energy and commitment of one or two people, who ingeniously bundle limited resources and make expedient decisions to keep their programs running" (1992, p. 57). This is not an easy task since, according to Redmond, "Human interactions are the most important element in the mentoring process, mentoring programs, [therefore,] are extremely labor-intensive and require continuous attention to relationships between mentors and their students" (Redmond, 1990, p. 195). In fact, several investigators emphasize that the starting point for a quality program is the recognition by program managers that running a mentoring program is not easy (Walsh, 1989). According to Marjorie

Wilkes of New York City Mentoring, "You can't just turn volunteers and kids loose, and hope for the best. It's plain unrealistic to assume mentoring is easy, or that you can do it on the cheap" (in Walsh, 1989, p. 24). The high turnover rate Flaxman and Ascher found in New York City and Walsh in

Oakland testifies to the complexity of this task and the need for a high level of energy and commitment by program managers.

Institutionalization/Integration of Program

Even energy and commitment on the part of the program manager is usually not enough to sustain a mentoring program if it is not institutionalized within a larger organization or integrated into an array of services provided to youth. According to Flaxman and Ascher, " Those programs that are most likely to sustain themselves are those that are institutionalized, or embedded in larger organizations via funding and by a staff member devoted to the effort" (1992, p. 49). Large mentoring programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters, New York City Mentoring, Career Beginnings, and I Have A Dream all have staff available to mentoring pairs.

In mentoring programs with paid staff, youth are much more likely to receive other supportive services such as health care and counseling. In fact, "case management," the brokering and integrating of services according to the needs of the individual child, is a major function of programs with full-time staff. Unfortunately, Flaxman and Ascher found that, "A lack of coordination in services offered to students is a particular problem" with most mentoring programs that rely on volunteer mentors (1992, p. 50).

Another advantage of institutionalizing a mentoring program within a larger organization is that of more stability and continuity. Besides the greater probability of program continuance, field staff ensure that youth are not left on their own if their mentor leaves. Marc Freedman claims that paid field staff are the "most important single ingredient" in successful mentoring programs. "These individuals are in contact with the kids, the mentors, school staff, and families. Not surprisingly, in programs where such staff are a full-time presence, the whole mentoring process tends to revolve around them; they are the `glue' in the mentoring process" (1991, p. 63). In fact, several investigators have found that even in programs that employ volunteer mentors, it is the paid staff, serving as youth workers or program coordinators, that are, in essence, the real mentors to youth (Freedman, 1991; Higgins et al, 1991; Ferguson, 1990).

Careful Selection of Mentors and Youth

Cross-race matching is an opportunity for both participants to begin to appreciate cultural diversity and "to learn that neither social nor personal difference is unbridgeable" - certainly a desperately needed attitude in our culture!

Considering the damage an unsuccessful relationship can have for both parties, carefully selecting both the mentors and youth is a unanimous recommendation in the literature. According to Freedman, programs must "screen out and not screen in" prospective mentors. This means, "Letting them know about the harder realities of mentoring from the start so that only those individuals really committed would become involved" (1991, p. 61). While various attributes are ascribed to mentors who make a difference (i.e., liking and respect for youth, personal commitment, willingness to listen, openness, empathy, etc.), they all reflect the earlier discussed components of a healthy mentoring relationship: caring attitude, high expectations, participatory style, and commitment.

Similarly, because a healthy relationship is based on reciprocity, the youth also must be willing to make a commitment of time and be open and receptive to new ideas (Smink, 1990). The critical--and unresolved--issue in the selection of youth is whether mentoring is an appropriate intervention for truly disadvantaged youth or whether mentoring best serves youth in the middle who could make it with a little extra support. For the most part, investigators concur that, first of all, youths who are doing well in school and are well connected socially do not need a mentor. In fact, practitioners have found that these youth usually don't have time to spend with a mentor (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992).

Secondly, in terms of youth at high risk, most experts would agree with Freedman that, "If mentoring programs are to serve the truly disadvantaged, they must be both intensive and extensive, start early and plan to stick around for a long time. They must also be prepared for inevitable failures and be ready to intervene when problems arise and relationships do not take hold" (1991, p. 60). Since most mentoring programs using only adult volunteers do not meet these qualifications and depend on the cooperation of youth, programs have generally found more success in focusing on the kids in the middle who have a chance of succeeding with additional help (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1991; Bloomfield, 1989). However, as Freedman notes, "Programs serving B and C students have found that even youth perceived as at less risk often confront far more obstacles than anticipated, and are in many cases in danger of dropping out" (1991, p. 60).

Matching Adults and Youth

"Warm interpersonal relations are more likely to result from a focus on building competence than from a focus on building a relationship. The latter goal is simply too vague and open-ended."

The major issues involved in matching adults and youth are those of choice versus assignment and those of same versus cross-ethnicity/race, gender, and class. In terms of whether a mentor pair should choose each other, opinions are mixed. The survey of Career Beginnings participants found no difference in outcomes for assigned pairs than for mutually chosen ones (Harris, 1990). Most programs that assign do use questionnaires completed by adults and youth to assist in identifying mutual interests. However, according to Flaxman and Ascher,

most of these questionnaires are based on superficialities and do not measure the more "elusive characteristics" that may actually explain why relationships "flourish or falter": "caretaking or nurturing styles, energy levels, conservatism as opposed to the wish for adventure and exploration, or rigidity versus a tolerance for ambiguity and conflict on the part of both mentors and mentees" (1992, p. 36). Furthermore, according to Walsh's research, a consensus is emerging that, "Students should have some role in the selection process" (1989, p. 30).

Several programs plan activities and meetings for all prospective mentors and mentees to get to know one another--hopefully at the "elusive characteristics" level!--and then give them the opportunity to list three people they'd like to be matched with. The real issue in one-on-one mentoring programs, according to Ferguson, is that the matching process is *flexible* so that if some matches are uncomfortable, the partners can change.

The issue of whether same gender, race, and class is important is more complicated. Certainly if one of the program goals is to have a successful role model of the same race and/or sex, then same-race and/or same-sex matching is important. Similarly, if too much "social distance" exists, in terms of socioeconomic class especially, it can interfere with the adult's ability "to empathize with the mentee, to identify the mentee's needs, and to provide small, workable steps in the achievement of a realistic goal" (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988, p. 51). While much dialog surrounds the issue of cross-race matching especially, Flaxman and Ascher's perspective seems the most viable: "One might say that difference inevitably makes a difference, but that this difference is detrimental only when the mentor is insensitive to the youth's values and adaptive attitudes and behaviors" (1992, p. 32). Moreover, they found, as have several other investigators, that cross-race matching is an opportunity for both participants to begin to appreciate cultural diversity and "to learn that neither social nor personal difference is unbridgeable"-- certainly a desperately needed attitude in our culture! (quote from Flaxman and Ascher, 1992, p. 32; Harris, 1990; Redmond, 1990).

For the most part, the majority of investigators have found that caring is what matters most: "There is virtual consensus among program operators that `love matters most.' It is the adults who become involved because they enjoy spending time with young people, rather than because they feel compelled to save youth from poverty, who seem to make the greatest strides" (Freedman, 1991, p. 61).

Clear and Specific Goals

The literature is unanimous that the most successful mentoring programs have "clear, well-articulated, and achievable goals" that focus on the development of the youth's competence in some area. Hamilton and Hamilton concluded from their experience with Linking Up that, "Competence, the capacity to do something well, is a goal concrete enough that both mentor and protëgë get a clear picture of what kinds of activities are likely to help

achieve it" (1992, p. 549). They found that mentoring relationships focused on the development of a competence a kid needed were the most functional "because they stressed specific areas of knowledge and skill and did things that made sense to the youngsters" (1992, p. 547). Furthermore, clear goals give mentors an understandable purpose for their involvement, "an understanding that can be a critical predictor of the regularity of meetings" (1992, p. 547).

Flaxman and Ascher also claim that having a specific and "limited goal for planned mentoring is precisely the basis for its success in organizations. The organization arranges for senior employees to take younger workers under their wings to provide the organizational know-how, networks, and protection to enable these young people to advance in the organization" (1988, p. 46). Hamilton and Hamilton concur that for older adolescents, "Mentoring programs based in workplaces have enormous advantages. The mentor is already there; the tasks are waiting to be done; there are skills to be learned, people to be met, and things to talk about" (1992, p. 550). While less structured, other mentoring efforts such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Career Beginnings, and I Have A Dream all have differing goals, but they all have clearly identified goals that determine the activities of the mentoring relationship.

Even though the underlying mission of mentoring programs is the development of a caring relationship, Hamilton and Hamilton concluded that, "Warm interpersonal relations are more likely to result from a focus on building competence than from a focus on building relationship. The latter goal is simply too vague and open-ended" (1992, p. 549). As one practitioner explains, "Programs have to understand human nature. It would be wonderful if we could just put these two people together and tell them to relate, but it's not realistic. This isn't a spontaneous relationship, so we can't expect people to just wing it for a year. We've found that when mentors and mentees have something to do or work on together, it gives them more direction.. You have to give people a reason for the relationship" (Sharon Breland of Jobs for Youth, in Walsh, 1989, p. 26). Freedman agrees that tasks provide a structure, a "scaffolding" for relationship development: "Tasks can absorb initial nervous energy, provide a basis for conversation between partners and diffuse the stigma of receiving help" (1991, p. 62). The key, of course, is to find the right task--as youth apprenticeship and community service programs appear to have done--one that encourages the development of both the relationship and the youth's competencies.

Training and Preparation for Adults and Youth

Some programs advocate engaging the adolescents being mentored as mentors themselves to younger children in order to give them direct experience as mentors, thus facilitating the development of a salient and meaningful experience.

While the need for training both adults and youth is commonly acknowledged by program planners, great diversity exists in terms of the training provided by mentoring efforts. Some

programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters offer "a well-planned curriculum, including such topics as stages of child and adolescent development, communication, role clarification, cultural and ethnic considerations, child abuse prevention, and planning match activities" which takes place over several hours and several weeks (Flaxman and Ascher, 1992, p. 37). Flaxman and Ascher's survey found, however, that, "For most programs the training is simpler and more informal. Most common is a get-together--sometimes for mentors and mentees at the same time--in which mentoring is defined, some goals are suggested, a few tidbits of advice are dispensed (say, on building trust, being a good listener, or overcoming difference), and there may be some role-playing" (1992, p. 37).

Creating a warm, supportive atmosphere is as important for the mentors ans for the mentees.

While no studies currently exist illuminating the components of effective mentoring training, common-sense dictates that mentors need to understand, as discussed earlier, the bottom line necessity of commitment. Furthermore, they need to understand what goes into a positive mentoring relationship: caring, high and realistic expectations--and how to communicate them--and youth participation. Certainly, as participants at a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Urban Strategies Council stressed, "Mentors need to learn about the lives of their mentees--the role of peer pressure and family problems--as well as basic principles of youth development. Training should teach the goals of the mentor program, and instill a sense of its cultural context, the values it seeks to impart, as well as the resources either the program or the wider community can offer the mentee" (Walsh, 1989, p. 27). Other commentators also recommend that mentors be clearly instructed in effective ways to work with the parents of the youth so that a relationship of mutual trust and respect with them also develops.

Preparing youth for the mentoring relationship is also a critical component of effective programs (Freedman, 1991, p. 60). Youth also must be clear in the program's goals and in their expected roles as well as in how to make the most of the experience. Mentioned earlier as an effective strategy to encourage youth participation, some programs advocate engaging the adolescents being mentored as mentors themselves to younger children in order to give them direct experience as mentors, thus facilitating the development of a salient and meaningful experience.

Ongoing Support for Mentors

"Program operators are unequivocal about the importance of supporting mentors and the consequences of failing to do so," states Freedman (1991, p. 62). In fact, serving the needs of mentors is as important as serving the needs of youth; you can't have one without the other! According to Ferguson, "Most programs expect to use volunteer mentors to supplement the love and attention that their paid staffs provide to children, but those that have tried have experienced only limited success at finding mentors and keeping them active. *They have discovered that fulfilling mentors' needs is as important for sustaining their involvement as*

fulfilling youths' needs is to sustaining theirs p. 15). Similarly, in Project Redirection, a mentoring program for teen mothers, investigators found that "creating a warm, supportive atmosphere was as important for the mentors as for the teens in the program" (Walsh, 1989, p. 27). Because so much of mentoring is done in isolation, Freedman found that many initiatives have organized self-help groups, so mentors can emotionally support each other, share experiences, and problem-solve mutual issues, and have also used mentoring teams in which several adults mentor several youth (1991, p. 62).

Besides support, mentors also need rewards. Of course, the ultimate reward emanates from the development of a caring relationship. However, because the rewards from a relationship are often more ambiguous and not always forthcoming, Haensly's review of school-based mentoring models recommends rewards of public recognition like ceremonies and newsletters (1989). Unfortunately, as Ferguson concludes, "Few programs have the resources to serve the needs of mentors as well as youth" (1990, p. 60).

Mentoring: Toward a Perspective

"Modest Intervention"

The approach that appeals to me as a preventionist is the concept of infusing mentoring - as a way of being with kids - into the family, school, and community lives of youth.

Given what we've learned about planned mentoring, just what should we conclude about its effectiveness as a prevention and early intervention strategy? Is it a "lodestone" to and "quick fix" for building healthy development in children and youth and thus preventing the problems of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school failure, and delinquency? Does mentoring live up to the "mythic" claims we discussed earlier?

Perhaps Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington provide us with the clearest perspective in summarizing mentoring as "a modest intervention": "Planned mentoring should be considered a modest intervention. Unlike natural mentoring, its power to substitute for the missing adults in the lives of youths is limited: it occurs too infrequently and is not intense enough to do for these youth what natural mentoring is reputed to do" (1988, p. 51). Certainly, planned mentoring does not fulfill its mythological attributes as follows:

- *Easy:* Relationship development is time-consuming and hard work.
- *Cheap:* Effective mentoring programs are labor intensive, expensive, and not particularly cost-effective.
- *Mass movement:* Given the time commitment required of mentors, the number of volunteers for most programs remains small.
- *A success strategy:* We really don't have enough evaluation data to know. However, obviously, even when positive relationships do form, "These bonds are just one influence amid many on the lives of the youngsters" (Freedman, 1991, p. 55).
- *The answer to our social ills:* Even common sense dictates that this is not the case, for mentoring does not address the structural roots of disadvantage.

Part of a Comprehensive Continuum of Support Services

Planned mentoring, like any one intervention, is clearly not a lodestone or a quick fix. "As we have learned in programs for many youth, particularly youth without substantial social resources, there is no single essential intervention" (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988, p. 43). Rather, as several investigators have concluded and from what we've learned about effective prevention programming in the last decade, it should be part of a comprehensive

continuum of preventive and early interventive support services for youth. Mentoring cannot succeed as a stand-alone intervention but must be part of an integrated, child-centered service delivery system. According to Flaxman and Ascher, "Mentoring programs, like all youth services, should be able to answer questions like: What services do youth need? Are they receiving it in the school or the community? Can my program supply what they need? and How can it be coordinated with the other services they are receiving to be sure the youth are getting full support? When this occurs, mentoring can nicely fit into a system of coherently related service" (1992, p. 68). Within this context, planned mentoring can do what it does best--provide support in terms of linking youth to resources they would not otherwise have had and in terms of encouraging the development of academic and social competencies by conveying high expectations and providing opportunities for active participation.

Infusion of Mentoring into Family, School, and Community Life

A sad irony, according to Freedman, is that "As awareness grows about the importance of adult relationships for youth in the institutions increasingly entrusted with their education, nurturance, and development, we continue to undercut their ability to provide such support."

The approach that appeals to me as a preventionist is the concept of infusing mentoring--*as a way of being with kids* into the family, school, and community lives of youth. While most mentoring "programs" fall into the category of early intervention, prevention efforts can focus on creating what Freedman refers to as "mentor-rich environments"--environments that create lots of opportunities for young people to interact with an array of caring adults (1991, p. 67). From this perspective, mentoring is "Not an all-or-nothing dichotomy [i.e., you either have a `mentor' or you don't], but as <EM>a continuum of developmental alliances, ranging from the very intense to the more superficial</EM>" (Hurley, 1988, p. 43). According to Freedman, "Creating mentor-rich schools, social programs and youth organizations is one way of moving beyond the chimera of `supermentoring,' [i.e, the `all-or-nothing' approach] in which a single charismatic adult is called on to be a heroic influence, providing for all the young person's needs in one relationship" (1991, p. 67).

What this means is that we expand the world of adult contacts for all youth in their natural environments--their families, their schools, their communities. This means we must support families in their efforts to parent via family-centered social policies that promote flexible work policies, parental leave, time off to work in schools, decent wages, family healthcare benefits, and quality child care. Communities must also create opportunities for youth to be directly involved with more adults through more youth apprenticeship programs, more opportunities for community service, more involvement in local government, and so on.

In terms of schools, this means, first and foremost, reducing the teacher/student ratio so teachers, in their natural role, can create mentoring relationships with students. Years ago, Sheppard Kellam, a premier researcher into early childhood predictors of later substance abuse and delinquency, concluded that the first step schools can take to prevent these

problems is to promote the bonding process by cutting class size to no more than 25 so that teachers not only have the time to develop caring relationships, but also can make learning child-centered so that, "The curriculum reaches every single child in that classroom at the point the child is at in learning and takes them forward step by step with one small increment after another" (in Krucoff, 1982).

Furthermore, we can increase the number of adults in the school and classroom by making sure every school has a sufficient number of counselors, social workers, librarians, art and music teachers, and youth workers available to kids as well as adult and parent volunteers. Programs based on the University of Rochester's Primary Mental Health Project model (known in several states as PIP, Primary Intervention Program), in which adults work either one-on-one or with small groups in the elementary classroom and school, have demonstrated positive findings on the academic and behavioral outcomes for children for over thirty years (Weissberg et al., 1983). Also, having a variety of programs and activities with adult sponsors or bringing in folks from community-based organizations to direct a variety of programs--peer helping, cross-age helping, conflict resolution, violence prevention, cultural awareness, career planning, etc.--increases substantially the number of adults in close proximity with youth.

It is imperative for us as preventionists that we don't abdicate this leadership role in the political arena. We have to be willing to work politically, to convince others to pay what it costs to create mentor-rich, caring environments with high expectations and opportunities for youth to actively participate.

What this increase means is that all youth have greatly increased opportunities for natural mentoring to occur, for the spontaneous development of relationships based on mutual attraction, salience, and chemistry. Unfortunately, as we in education know all too well, the above positions and programs are usually the first to go when budgets get tight. A sad irony, according to Freedman, is that "As awareness grows about the importance of adult relationships for youth in the institutions increasingly entrusted with their education, nurturance and development, we continue to undercut their ability to provide such support. If anything, we are moving in the opposite direction: cutting staff, clearing away all but the most essential roles, burdening the remaining adults with so many formal responsibilities that forming relationships with struggling young people, or bringing in volunteers to do so, becomes a virtual impossibility" (1991, p. 69). This quandary clearly underscores the issue of the role the mentoring movement plays in the social policy arena.

Not A Social Policy

It is through taking sides, bearing witness, and telling the truth that we can "build a public realm in which citizens work together for educational reform [and prevention efforts] that will fully foster human development.

What clearly emerges from the current thinking on planned mentoring is that it is not a social

policy that will address the underlying socioeconomic, systemic, structural roots of disadvantage in our society. According to Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, "Whatever mentoring can accomplish, it is important to realize that mentoring is not a panacea for the problems of youth, particularly at-risk youth" (1988, p. 52). Freedman also concurs that mentoring does not offer us "a panacea for complex and long-standing social problems" (1991, p. 2). Just as disadvantaged children have been and are socially created, by policies that systematically deny them opportunities to succeed in society, to change this situation requires new social policies. Eitzen clearly describes just what these changes must look like: "Since the problems of today's young people are largely structural, solving them requires structural changes. The government must create jobs and supply job training as well as exert more control over the private sector. In particular, corporations must pay decent wages and provide adequate benefits to their employees. There must be an adequate system for delivering health care, rather than our current system that rations care according to ability to pay. There must be massive expenditures on education to equalize opportunities from state to state and from community to community. There must be equity in pay scales for women. And finally, there must be an unwavering commitment to eradicating institutional sexism and racism" (1992, p. 590).

A real danger exists in "over-selling" mentoring as a prevention strategy, in that "If mentoring is oversold and diverts attention from such needed changes as the restructuring of schools or the creation of more and better jobs, then it will have a paradoxical effect" (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988, p. 52). If mentoring diverts attention from the need to address deep-seated problems like poverty and unemployment, racism and sexism, then advocating this approach is clearly a means of "copping out" from seeking solutions in the political arena. However, Reedman raises the possibility that if mentoring is acknowledged as being a very limited intervention that must be integrated within a child-centered support system and as not being a substitute for effective social policy, then perhaps the adults who do volunteer to mentor will join the ranks of youth advocates and form a critical mass for reform: "Mentoring provides a specific context in which to initiate the process of reconstructing the empathy that is essential for building not only better policies and institutions for poor youth, but also a good and civil society. It amounts to an elementary school of caring for *other people's children,* the children of the poor" (1991, p. 71).

That our society has not been particularly concerned with caring for other peoples' children is clearly reflected in our lack of a family and youth policy on the national level. In fact, as Eitzen states, "These proposals seem laughable in the current political climate, where politicians are timid and citizens seem interested only in reducing their tax burden. The political agenda for meeting our social problems requires political leadership that is innovative and capable of convincing the public that sacrifices to help the disadvantaged today will pay long-term benefits to all. *Such leadership will emerge from a base of educated citizens who are willing to work to challenge others to meet societal goals"* (1992, p. 590). It is imperative for us as preventionists that we don't abdicate this leadership role in the political arena. We have to be willing to work politically, to convince others to pay what it costs to create mentor-rich, caring environments with high expectations and opportunities for youth to

actively participate. We have to be willing to work for seemingly unpopular, but increasingly necessary, policies like progressive taxation that will create a more equitable distribution of power and resources within our nation (Kozol, 1991; Reich, 1991; Lusane, 1991). We have to convince others that, as a bumper sticker I recently saw stated, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!"

Perhaps the following statement advertising a youth advocacy program of the Berkeley-Oakland Support Services best exemplifies where we are and what we need to move from: "To deny one American child healthcare, food, housing, and education is called child abuse. To deny 10 million American children healthcare, food, housing, and education is called balancing the budget." If we are to give *all* children and youth in our nation the opportunities to be successful, then we must follow the words of wisdom of Richard Price, a long-time preventionist: We must "take sides" on issues, "bear witness for what we believe, and "tell the truth"--truth, according to philosopher Thomas McCollough, "that reflects the needs of all those in society, including those on the margins, out of sight, invisible, and helpless to exercise political power for themselves" (1991, p. 6). According to Price, "These are conclusions that are hard to live by. But I believe we have no other choice" (1989, p. 163). It is through taking sides, bearing witness, and telling the truth that we can "build a public realm in which citizens work together for educational reforms [and prevention efforts] that will fully foster human development" (McCollough, 1991, p. 9).

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